



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today issued the following statement:

"There has been so much misinformation spread about the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Essex County, Massachusetts, that I feel constrained to state the facts in the case for the benefit of those citizens of Massachusetts who have been misled.

"The Parker River refuge was planned to care for migratory waterfowl which breed in the Maritime provinces of Canada and which winter in the United States. It is to be operated as a part of the Atlantic flyway system and has been established pursuant to our obligations under the Migratory Bird Treaty.

"The particular site was selected because wilderness areas of sufficient size are difficult to find along the New England coast, and of those areas available, the Parker River property was regarded as most suitable.

"The purchase of the area was approved, as all such purchases are, by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. This commission consists of the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, two members of the Senate, and two members of the House of Representatives.

"The acquisition of this refuge has extended over a period of at least six years. During the past five years contacts have been made by the Fish and Wildlife Service with a large number of landowners. Purchases of property have duly been recorded according to Massachusetts law.

"The total area being acquired is 14,213.07 acres, of which much is under water. The majority of the acreage is low grade property. Of the total acreage 1.30 acres is in orchard; there are 74.25 acres of agricultural land, 49.90 acres of abandoned agricultural land, and 70.30 acres of pasture. The total of 204.75 acres of land in these categories compares with 113,859 acres in agricultural use in Essex County. Thus, it will be seen, that the government is removing an insignificant amount of agricultural land from use in the county.

"The property, in addition, contains 1,475 acres of salt marsh. Last year only about 20 per cent of this acreage was cut for hay. The former owner of this property, and others who desire to harvest salt hay, will be allowed to do so in the future under readily obtainable permits for which moderate charges are made.

"All of the remaining acreage consists of woodland, marsh, and water.

"It has been rumored that many persons would lose their homes as a result of the establishment of the refuge. In actuality one family was in permanent residence on all of the property purchased.

"There have been charges that Federal purchase of this property will mean a large tax loss to Essex County. The taxes on the land involved amount to only \$3,756, or 1.4 per cent of the revenue from real estate taxes of the five towns in which the property is located.

"It is the policy of the Department to make use of all surplus natural resources on its refuges. These include timber, firewood, marsh hay, and fur bearing animals. By law 25 per cent of receipts from such items are returned to the county in lieu of taxes, for school and road purposes. I anticipate that within a relatively short period the amount so derived will equal, if not exceed, the small amount of taxes which will now be lost to the county.

"The value of this land for fish and wildlife will be greatly increased as a refuge and the fish and wildlife resources of the surrounding area will naturally be enhanced. I believe that day will come when citizens of Massachusetts, and especially those of Essex County, will be proud of this refuge and will regard it as being as important locally as it is sure to be in our Nation-wide program for conservation of our wildlife."